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WILDLIFE SERVICES—DELAWARE

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USDA Resolves Wildlife Conflicts in Delaware

Every day, residents, industries, organizations, and agencies call on Delaware Wildlife Services (WS) for expertise in protecting agriculture, property, natural resources, and human health and safety from damage or threats posed by wildlife. Managed by professional wildlife biologists, WS responds with effective, selective, and humane strategies to resolve wildlife conflicts.

Delaware WS has been called upon by the Division of Fish and Wildlife of the Delaware Department of Natural Resources and Environmental Control to help businesses, farmers, and residents who are experiencing problems with migratory birds. WS provides technical assistance to resolve conflicts with Canada geese, snow geese, and vultures. WS also works to reduce human safety risks and direct damage to aircraft by providing technical assistance to airports about wildlife management.



Applying Science & Expertise to Wildlife Challenges

WS offers information, advice, equipment, and materials that enable many people to resolve wildlife conflicts on their own. Often, this *technical assistance* can be provided over the phone. WS also provides on-site expertise, or *direct assistance*, to manage complex wildlife problems that cannot be safely resolved by others. To support this effort, WS conducts *scientific research* across the Nation to develop answers to new problems posed by wildlife and to ensure the program benefits from the latest science and technology.

Protecting Agriculture—Delaware's location between the Chesapeake Bay and the Delaware Bay is an attractive and popular stop for many migratory waterfowl in the Atlantic Flyway. The Atlantic Flyway Council (AFC) reports that the numbers of migratory Canada geese and snow geese have steadily increased in the past five years. The AFC also reports that greater numbers of snow geese are damaging coastal salt marsh habitat, as well as agricultural crops they feed on during their over-winter stays. This has placed additional pressure on Delaware's small grain producers who already face crop damage from Canada geese. WS has provided technical assistance to farmers, residents, and golf course managers. These individuals reported approximately \$75,000 in damage due to conflicts with geese.

Major Assistance Activities:

- Providing technical assistance and equipment to alleviate damage by migratory birds
- Reducing wildlife hazards to aviation

Top 5 WS Research Projects of Interest to Delaware:

- Defining and reducing wildlife hazards to aviation
- Managing problems caused by vultures
- Evaluating waterfowl as disease, parasite, and noxious weed reservoirs
- Improving assessment, sampling, and economic methods for wildlife damage management
- Reducing goose damage through avian infertility

Protecting Air Travel—Wildlife hazards at airports have become a major concern due to the potential for significant damage to aircraft and the threat posed to public health and safety. Wildlife collisions with aircraft cost the U.S. civil aviation industry more than \$470 million annually. WS works with the Delaware River and Bay Authority to identify and reduce wildlife hazards at the New Castle County Airport.

In addition, WS' National Wildlife Research Center (NWRC), conducts research from its Sandusky, OH Field Station to reduce hazards to aviation and the flying public. Studies are underway at several large airports where scientists evaluate habitat management practices and wildlife dispersal techniques.

NWRC also maintains the National Wildlife Strike Database used by the Federal Aviation Administration and airports to monitor trends and wildlife species of greatest concern to aviation.

Looking to the Future

Nationwide, wildlife managers have placed a renewed focus on public safety. This is particularly true at airports. An increase in air travel coupled with growth in the populations of deer and many bird species has created a greater need for wildlife management at airports to reduce wildlife threats. Delaware WS must be able to meet the increased demand for this very specialized area of work.

Another public health and safety issue is the growing need to protect people, pets and livestock from diseases. West Nile virus is a major health concern on the East Coast. In fiscal year 2000, Delaware reported four horses that tested positive for West Nile virus. In fiscal year 2001, Delaware reported one horse that tested positive for the virus. If adequate resources were available, WS could provide greater assistance to Federal, State, and local public health officials with West Nile virus outbreaks.



Delaware Wildlife Services Funding

In addition to receiving federally allocated funds, WS also receives money from cooperators; such as producers; private individuals; businesses; and other Federal, State, and local government agencies who have a vested interest in the program. In most cases, these cooperators need help to resolve wildlife damage problems or they play a role in wildlife damage management.

